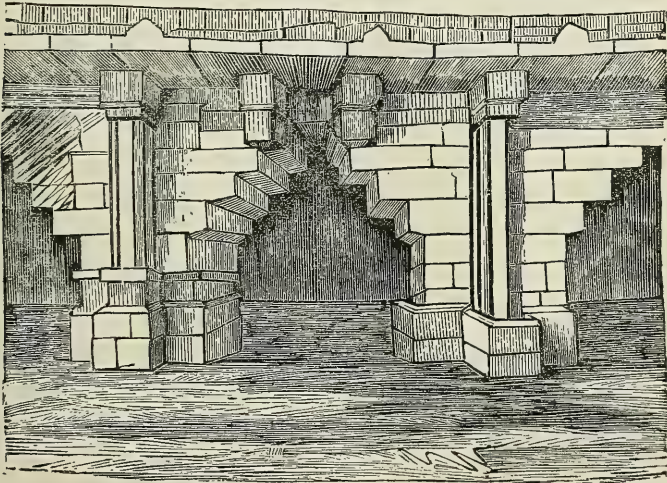


*Description of a Hindu Temple converted into a Mosque at Gaganes'var, Zilá Medinipur.—By W. HERSCHEL, Esq., B. C. S.*

[Received 21st December, 1867.]

This is another fine specimen of the stone buildings to be found in the South-western parts of Medinipur. I visited it in 1866. The plan of the building is an oblong enclosure. Outside, nothing is to be seen but a flat wall, about 15 feet high, of clean cut massive laterite stones, with no other ornament than a square beading of the same style as that described for Chandrarekhá Garh at page 183 of the Journal. (Vol. XXXV. pt. i.) The long side is about 312 feet, and the other 252 feet, outside. There is no opening anywhere in the wall except at the one narrow solid gate-way, so that the place looks queer and forbidding. Perhaps for this reason it is called a Garh by the people, and possibly enough it was so used, when occasion required, as a defence against Mahrattas. But the plan of the building is that of an ordinary Mandir, in the centre of a large courtyard surrounded by a high solid wall, on the inner side of which, the whole way round, is a row of serais like cloisters. The wood cut below shews one such serai.

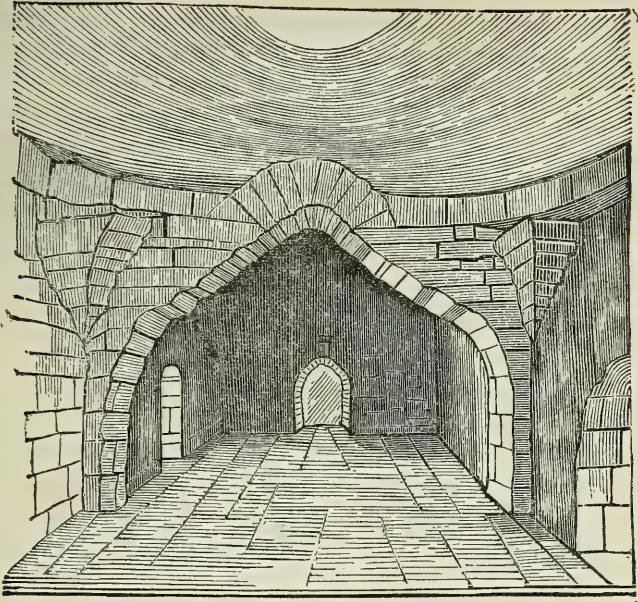


From each of the squat square piers an arch (so to call it, though it is only laminated as in the sketch) springs across the cloister to the

outer wall; so that each serai is formed of three such doorways as in the sketch, and the flat wall for the fourth side. The perspective view down the cloister in the inside, shewing some twenty of these arches is very impressive, owing to the massiveness of the work. Each opening is about 10 feet high. A very few of the ornamental pillars are rounded, and the (apparent but not real) keystone in each serai has a lotus with a pendant pistil. These are the only curved lines in the building. All the rest is severely straight. The South-western corner of the enclosure is a good deal ruined, shewing the huge stones to have been held together in some parts with iron clamps. At the Western side a white stone is let into the wall, bearing a Uriyá inscription, which I could not decipher or get deciphered at the time, though it is legible enough where not defaced. The villagers declare it was purposely defaced by a certain officer of Government, who has, however, denied the charge on enquiry. The week and month are legible, but unfortunately the year has been defaced. The villagers can give no conception as to the date, which must be inferred from the stones.

In the centre stood one of the ordinary tall many fluted Hindu temples, consisting only of a spire over the Ling, and a small room in front of it. The sketch given of the temple at Chandrarekhá (Ante Vol. XXXV. pt. I. p. 185,) would have suited this one also. The temple, except the foundations, has been entirely destroyed by the "Moghals" as the villagers call the Muhammedans here. It has gone to make the platform of the Mosque which now stands at the Western end of the oblong. Where the Ling used to stand, a well has been sunk by a pious or treasure-seeking Brahmin, who gave out that the Ling had retired there. He failed to recover it, and carved instead two common idols on two slabs of stone, which lie in one of the cloisters, receiving very precarious worship from the people.

The Mosque itself is built of new small stones. There is nothing noteworthy about it except the unusual smallness of the entrances, generally so handsome in Muhammadan buildings. Though in the form of a pointed arch, they are only cut out of the wall, as it were. Inside, however, is a good specimen of a true arch, crowning an almost complete laminated arch. The sketch of it, given below, is perhaps worth inspection. The little entrance at the end (as well as another



like it) has, instead of seven or eight stones in arch, only one cut like a key-stone. But as the entrance is cut through solid masonry and is small, there was no need of any key-stone, and it has sunk down for want of pressure on its sides. I note this, because it is difficult to guess why the key-stone was put there at all, unless it was to give the appearance of an arch. The dome is only a weak rubble and mortar thing, which is falling in. There was once a village of 300 houses of Muhammadans near Gaganes'var. Nothing is left of them but the mounds of the village and this mosque, and some Persian words in the Zemindári vocabulary. The Zemindár has no records of them in his papers. I do not suppose the original building is more than three or four hundred years old. In the inscription it is called a "berá," and its name among the villagers is "the Kamberá."

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*Note by the Editor.*—The inscription alluded to above is in the Uriyá language and character, but seven out of eight lines of it being defaced by the strokes of a hatchet or some other blunt iron instrument, the

purport of it cannot be fully made out. The first line alone is legible; it begins by stating that, "in the invincible reign of the auspicious hero and Mahárájá S'rí Pratápakapáles'vara Deva, on Wednesday the 22nd of Vaisákha, in the year — (?) the building of the enclosure of S'rí Gaganes'vara."—(*S'rí Vira S'rí Pratápa-kapálesvara Deva Mahárájankaru vijaya ráje samasta anka S'rí ha mesa 22n. budhaváre S'rí Gaganes'vara Devanku vedá gāḥana*).—The name of the king in its integrity does not occur in Prinsep's Tables; the first part Pratápa is common enough, and was assumed by two of the Súrýavañsi kings, but neither of them had Kapáles'vara (lord of skulls) for the second part. That word, however, is a name of Mahádeva, and one of the most common names of that divinity is Rudra, and if this circumstance would warrant the assumption of the two words being used synonymously, the name would be that of the unfortunate Pratáparudra, who reigned from 1503 to 1524, and left thirty-two sons, all to be murdered by his minister Govinda Deo. The date of the enclosure, according to this conjecture, would be the first quarter of the sixteenth century.

R. M.

